

Farmer group switches on to precision farming

Farmers in south Cambridgeshire are moving ahead with plans to set up a major RTK guidance system.

RTK Farming Ltd was set up by five farmers working with NIAB, which already uses the GPS technology to improve the accuracy of its field trials.

They aim, with the help of EEDA funding, to establish the RTK standard GPS signal network and bring the benefits of precision farming techniques in reach of farmers who would otherwise be unable to afford it.

At a demonstration day at Harlton, outside Cambridge, farmers found out more about the plans and watched tractors and other farm machinery guided by an RTK signal.

Farmer David White of RTK Farming, said the aim was to enable more than 70 farms to have access to the network, eventually covering more than 160,000 arable hectares.

He said the initial network will consist of six base stations, with an additional six added in the second year of the project and repeater stations as required. Potential savings would be £10-£12/ha on seeding and fertiliser applications alone.

"We will also be recruiting farmers to take part in pre and post RTK measuring and benchmarking of operations on their farms, as well as setting up training and discussion groups.

"Rather than being on their own,

farmers will be able to benefit from the experience of other people in the area and learn from each other," he said.

The aim is to cover 70,000 arable hectares in the first year of the project so farmers are not limited to using it on small areas of their farm. The network will use a Trimble signal, designed to be as universally compatible as it is technologically possible.

● More information is available from www.rtkfarming.co.uk

Demonstrating the RTK signal



Poultry sector looks to spread its wings

Attracting new people and improving skills in East Anglia's poultry industry came under the spotlight at a special meeting organised by the NFU.

The NFU hosted the meeting, at the NFU regional office in Newmarket, to look at new entrant opportunities, skills and training.

Members involved included large businesses such as Vion, Banhams, Gressingham Foods, Bernard Matthews, Crown Poultry Diaper Poultry. They were joined by a number of independent growers, large processors such as Jack Brand Ltd, turkey producers and the free range egg laying sector, who were all able to discuss the opportunities in their businesses around one table.

NFU regional policy adviser Alex Butler-Zagni said: "Many of the country's largest poultry businesses have their home in East Anglia so some of the biggest and brightest career opportunities are on our doorstep.

"They range from short periods of work placement experience right through to the other end of the scale, such as thin-sandwich degree courses at Harper Adams and heavily discounted senior management training."

One suggestion was to develop a website that would list information such as vacancies, training opportunities and funding available from organisations such as Poultec, LANTRA and Landskills East.

NEWS IN BRIEF

BOARD MEETING DATES

Here are the latest meeting dates for the NFU's regional commodity boards:

Regional crops board

9 November, starting at 4pm

Regional dairy board

13 October, starting at 11am

Regional livestock board

29 September and 1 December, starting at 6pm

Regional poultry forum

10 November, starting at 2pm, discussing the role of science and genetics.

Regional sugar beet

4 November, starting at 7pm

All the meetings are open to all members and are held at the NFU regional office, Newmarket. Please call 01638 672100 to find out more.

AWARD'S HELPING HAND

Young farmers looking to build up a livestock enterprise are being encouraged to apply for the Chris Lewis award. The £3,000 award, presented every two years, is sponsored by the Norfolk Farmers Trust. Applicants must be 30 or under at the time of application and to have lived in Norfolk for at least five years. For more details email Stanton@supanet.com

FLYTIPPING FACTS

Huntingdonshire District Council has published a leaflet entitled 'Fly Tipping – A Guide for Landowners in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough' which gives practical information and advice on dealing with fly tipping. The guide also provides information on how local authorities, the Environment Agency and police can assist in dealing with fly tipping. The leaflet is available on the council's website.

RED TAPE PLEDGE

South West Norfolk MP Elizabeth Truss is pledging to help farmers tackle "a mountain of red tape" after meeting NFU members in Downham Market. This was the first of regular meetings planned by the MP to consult with farmers. "I will be pressing Defra for the abolition of unnecessary quangos, a commonsense approach to inspections and a more streamlined, less bureaucratic payment process," she said.

MANAGING DEER

The Deer Initiative is holding a course for farmers and landowners on managing or letting deer stalking and how risks and liabilities associated with deer management can be managed. It takes place on 30 September at Great Barton, Suffolk. To book call 01842 890798.